



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

The habit of grinding teeth. Tooth-grinding is often done while asleep, but grinding or tapping teeth during the day is also common. Continual tooth-grinding may erode gums and supporting bones in the mouth.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Frequent contraction of muscles on the side of the face.
- Annoying, tooth-grinding noises at night. These may be loud enough to awaken others.
- Damaged teeth, supporting gums and bone (apparent in a dental exam).
- Headaches.

CAUSES

- Anxiety.
- Unconscious attempts to correct a faulty “bite” (contact between upper and lower teeth when jaws are closed).

RISK INCREASES WITH

Stress, anxiety or alcoholism.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Avoid stressful situations if possible.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable in 6 months with treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Without treatment, teeth, bones and gums may erode or crack from the pressure of grinding.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Recognition of the problem by the patient and a conscious effort to overcome the habit.
- Dentist's care. Your dentist may manufacture, fit and install a night-guard prosthesis to prevent tooth-grinding while asleep. A night-guard prosthesis consists of removable splints which fit over the tops of the teeth to eliminate incorrect biting pressure.
- Biofeedback training (relaxation exercises) or counseling to learn ways to cope more effectively with stress may be needed.
- Avoidance of alcohol.

MEDICATIONS

Medicine usually is not necessary for this disorder. A tranquilizer or a sedative for short-term treatment may help in certain cases.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You grind your teeth at night (or call your dentist).
- You develop pain around the ears, dizziness or ringing in the ears.
- You develop pain or clicking in the jaw.
- You lose or break your night-guard prosthesis.